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The American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR) recognizes that the strength and reputation of federal scientific enterprise rests on the fact that it operates outside of the realm of politics. Our rigorous system of peer review ensures that research conducted and supported with taxpayer dollars is scientifically meritorious and serves to improve the lives of all people equally. Imposing political or ideological screens on that system undermines its integrity. Recent intrusions into several NIH-funded studies based on their subject matter will have a chilling effect on research and will disable free scientific inquiry.

amfAR finds this interference particularly disturbing. Specific researchers have been targeted for interrogation, and their subjects of inquiry denigrated. Many of these scientists study how HIV is spread through human behavior, which is crucial to understanding and preventing HIV transmission. The Traditional Values Coalition, whose critique of the NIH grants cites communities they do not respect, including commercial sex workers, the gay population, and intravenous drug users, would prevent the benefits of federally-funded research from reaching these groups, many of which are at high risk of HIV exposure. amfAR deplores this complete misapprehension of scientific inquiry. Science does not value one life over another.

The American system of federal support for science – especially the National Institutes of Health – is admired throughout the world precisely because its rigorous system of peer review operates without political influence. amfAR makes funding decisions in much the same way, convening a national panel of experts who evaluate proposals on their intellectual and technical merits. Any other kind of review can prevent worthwhile scientific inquiry from contributing to the knowledge base.

Solving the mysteries of the body, human behavior, and the natural world that surrounds them, demands faithful adherence to intellectual curiosity alone, not to politics, opinion polling, or prejudice. amfAR will continue to denounce intellectual censorship, and any attempts to interfere with HIV/AIDS and other public health research. As long as the need for knowledge is so great, we must defend the capacity to pursue science in the service of all humanity.

amfAR is the nation's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to the support of AIDS research, AIDS prevention, treatment education, and the advocacy of sound AIDS-related public policy. Since 1985, amfAR has invested nearly \$207 million in support for its programs and awarded grants to more than 1,960 research teams worldwide.